

Exclusive Article: Droids and the Force

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Droids, Technology and the Force: A Clash of Phenomena

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Droids' rights have been a long-standing issue. Groups like the Coalition of Automaton Rights Activists and its more militant cousin the Mechanical Liberation Front, along with famous pamphlets such as San Herrera and Nia Reston's pioneering "Droid Rights" and Arhul Hextrophon's "The Problem of Droid Abuse," have succeeded to varying degrees in making headway for the recognition of droids as viable beings with certain unalienable rights. With the recent invasion of the technologically antagonistic Yuuzhan Vong, there has been a resurgence of droid discrimination among the galactic citizenry. The Jedi themselves have been somewhat reluctant to address the topic in the aftermath for reasons that have not been made clear with the general public. What follows is a careful dissection of the issue.

1. The Problem

In his book *Of Minds, Men, and Machines*, the renowned pre-Republic philosopher Plaristes argued fiercely and eloquently, and convincingly about the impossibility of automata ever achieving Artificial Sentience, citing roadblocks ranging from staggering concepts such as the postulation of reality, intention and freewill to trivial concerns like the ability to form proper syntax. Over twenty-five millennia of droids' existence, and over fifty billion droids in current service, however, have since proven him wrong.

Yet droid sentience remains as inexplicable as hyperdrive technology. Like consciousness in higher-order organics, it is only known that when certain cognitive components come together, self-awareness springs forth like an Akurian geyser. But there is no specific aspect of a droid's cognitive module or behavioral circuitry matrix that can be pinpointed as the particular cause of A.S., nor has a definite "cut-off" line been determined at a certain level of automaton: can it be said that a third degree droid (such as protocol droid) is sentient, yet a fourth degree (such as a single-minded IG assassin droid) or fifth degree droid (such as a monosyllabic ASP model) is not? Furthermore, can mindwipes, or the lack thereof, alter this perceived cut-off? Where does artificial sentience begin and where does it end?

These ambiguities, which should sound familiar to the various fauna rights organizations, have long allowed for the stubborn denial among organic beings of droid sentience, who cling to terms such as "near-sentience." But droid engineers testify to droids having predisposed personalities (or as the comedian Joon Odovrera put it, "Some droids are just born bad.") And how many persons have not heard a droid proclaim service to a "Maker." Many beings have tried to explain away this uneasy allusion as a droid simply referring to its manufacturer, however, few have dared to ask a droid itself what is meant by this.

The Maker, according to droids, is a reference to "the One Who Creates." This concept has been

treated contemptuously by the average biological being, but it is a matter of record that there exists a planet by the name Ronyards that is host to an entire population of deity worshipping mechanicals. It is also no secret that the Sunesi species also worships an entity called the Maker, and has a number of droid devotees within its religion.

These facts have made it obvious, if not palatable, to a majority of the intellectual community that droids do undoubtedly exhibit consciousness of a kind, as much insofar as one can claim the same of higher order biologicals. This, however, poses a new problem, particularly for those who work with a little phenomenon called the Force, the energy field that surrounds all living things.

All living things. Droids and the Force have never been thought of in compatible terms. Coupled with the lasting droid prejudice inspired by the Great Droid Revolution, and revived to some degree by the smaller Arkanian Revolution, these inorganic, reasoning creatures that are devoid of the Force have caused even respected Jedi Masters like Jorus C'baoth to label droids as abominations.

Yet, other Jedi haven't been so closed-minded, daring to ask the question: do droids truly exist outside the Force? After all, if the Force can be imbued into inanimate objects such as staffs and personal trinkets, even found in lifeless rock, what makes droids so different? Tales of Iron Knights (and even wild rumors about Jedi droids named Skippy) have fueled the fire for those devoted few who dared to press the question.

Ironically enough, while the Jedi only had marginal success in finding any connection between the Force and droids, mostly through the observation of the instinctual tendencies some Jedi such as Cay Qel-Droma and Anakin Solo exhibited toward fixing machinery, the first real proof of a correlation between the Force and droids came from the Sith. It is believed that through their bizarre alchemies, the Sith somehow stumbled upon the ability to manipulate mechanicals of complex nature through the Force: ships, computers, and, indeed, even droids. This power, known as mechu-deru, was responsible for the creation of Belia Darzu's infamous Technobeasts, which were capable of rewriting an organism's entire genetic code.

Needless to say, the idea that droids could only be touched by the Force through dark magicks discouraged the majority of Jedi from further researching the issue. It also didn't help that 'borgs -- sentients that had been fitted with extensive prosthetics or cybernetic enhancements -- such as the Clone Wars veteran Kligson and the bounty hunter Gorm the Dissolver, often exhibited explicitly deviant social behaviors. It was also a matter of record that Force-sensitive "cybered" beings generally demonstrated added difficulty in accessing the light side of the Force, at least initially, and often demonstrated a greater susceptibility to the dark side. Many a Jedi, including Even Piell and Tenel Ka, in part rejected prosthetics for these reasons. Doctors and Jedi Masters postulated that cybernetics made one "less human," reducing a person's empathy, but the accuracy of this theory was plagued by the gaps that persist in A.S. understanding, not to mention the omnipresence of droid prejudice. Certainly, great Jedi like King Empatojayos Brand and Daye Azur-Jamin would have much to say against this accusation of reduced humanity -- both lost more than half their organic selves, but a more just monarch and conscientious man are not easily found.

2. New Advances

Many things changed with the coming of Palpatine's New Order, to put it mildly, among them the Jedi taboo against researching the connection between the Force and mechanicals. The Emperor needed tools, tools that could be used to locate and detain the Jedi. Many Jedi had long maintained that the Force could not be empirically measured, nor synthetically manufactured. They were in a sense quite wrong, and this proved detrimental, as the effects of the Jedi Purge show. Perhaps because they could not see the Force, Palpatine's scientists could not be blinded by its wondrous light. They dissected the Force, treating it not as a supernatural phenomenon, but reducing it to its mere physical components: midi-chlorians and energy. With the morality of light and darkness no longer at issue, a cadre of Palpatine's super-scientists that included Umak Leth, Borborygmus Gog, and Lord Cronal sought to bridge the gap between technology and the Force with an aggression and reckless abandon never before applied. The result was three of the instruments most dreaded by the Jedi: the Essence Stealer, the Universal Energy Cage, and the Force Detector.

Procuring a Ssi-ruuvi battle droid vessel at an exorbitant price from rare ship collector Raith Sienar, Borborygmus Gog feverishly worked to discover the secrets of Ssi-ruuvi entechment -- a process by which a being's life-force could be stripped from his or her body and transferred to a mechanical construct (for the Ssi-ruuk, typically a droid ship). Gog succeeded in creating a soul-stealing machine able to rip the life-essence from a being and contain it within a giant computer-linked crystal matrix, while the comatose bodies were put in cryostasis in adjacent transparisteel containers. Setting the machine up within the old Jedi library on the abandoned Nespis VIII space station, Gog had hoped to trap the spirit of a Jedi for study. Yet, while his machine ensnared many life-forces, Gog was unable to capture a Force-sensitive, or at least not for long -- the Jedi he caught invariably willed themselves to die rather than partake in the evil experiment. No matter. Jedi philosophers had long stated that the Force was generated by all living things to a greater or lesser degree, and the Emperor's scientists found this to be true of the life-forces they captured.

The Essence Stealer was eventually destroyed during the Rebellion by the young Zak and Tash Arranda, who went on to become great Jedi in their own right. The freed spirits returned to their bodies if they were still preserved, and the rest went on to become one with the Force. It is suspected, however, that this particular machine was but one of several that were set up by Gog.

Building on the work of the demented researcher Jenna Zan Arbor, the scientists were able to study the trapped spirits endlessly, harnessing the energy field they created, and testing it. Its power was incredible. No energy source could rival it. A curiosity they did notice was the relation between the field and the incredibly durable Mandalorian iron: they found that the metal could not be affected by the Force energy field, this effect peculiar only to iron from Mandalore and not "normal" iron. The scientists mistakenly believed then that this odd iron could actually suppress the Force energy field. This proved untrue, though the metal did make for effective Jedi containment devices, as seen with Imperial Dungeon ships and Mandalorian handcuffs. However, it is suspected that the ysalamiri of Myrkr, creatures known for their ability to dampen the Force, could owe their unique gift to their ability to process the great quantities of Mandalorian iron to be found in the trees that serve as both home and nutrition for the creatures. It is suspected that the trees were transplanted at some point from Mandalore.

With the research gathered by the Essence Stealer, the floodgates were flung open. The scientist Umak Leth was able to design, among other weapons, the Universal Energy Cage. The cage was specifically designed to detain Jedi, annulling their powers by turning their very Force against them. But as an extra precaution, the cage was wrapped in a sphere of electron ray energy, the same used to contain the ionized plasma of reactor cores. This added precaution made it possible to hold any variety of creature, from the mystical Jedi to an enraged Herglic.

Another device that was realized during this period was the Force Detector. Originally designed though never implemented by Jenna Zan Arbor, and put to heinous use by the Inquisitors and others during the Jedi Purge, the Force Detector was often thought of as the epitome of the evil that could come from merging technology with the Force. A three-component system, the Force detector consisted of a control pack and two sheet-crystal readers -- transparent paddles slightly larger than an average humanoid hand. To operate the device, these paddles had to be inserted into the control pack, then aimed and bracketed around the subject. The device then scanned the subject in question, constructing a wire-frame hologram of him or her that hovered above the control pack. This wire frame had color-coded lines corresponding to an adjacent numbers column that scrolled out data such as height, weight, approximate age, and midi-chlorian count.

Similar to the tracking methods used by Sith probe droids, a blue nimbus would appear around the wire-frame hologram. This was not a simple representation of the midi-chlorian potency of a subject. In fact, it was not even originally one of Arbor's specifications for the device. Of the 10,000 Force Detectors that were made, the Emperor requested that every one be passed into the hands of his Dark Side Mage Lord Cronal, so that he could apply his "Science of Darkness." Using thaissen crystals acquired from the mines of Circarpous V, Lord Cronal adapted traditional lightsaber construction techniques to give the devices ability to identify the magnitude of Force potential in a given test subject and, amazingly, any dark side inclinations as well. These inclinations manifested themselves as blue and red auras, respectively. The other Imperial scientists were of course too proud to admit the possibility that despite all their perceived empirical expertise there were aspects of the Force they still could not begin to understand.

Most of these units have been destroyed or have disappeared since the great purge, but in a poetic twist of fate, Master Skywalker recovered a few and used them to identify candidates for resurrecting the Jedi Order. However, in an echo of the Dark Times, the dark Jedi Brakiss stole several of these when he flew from the Jedi Praxeum, and used them in turn to identify candidates for his Shadow Academy. Master Skywalker has since disdained their use, but it is well known that Master Kyp Durrone used one to detect the Force-sensitivity in his Padawan Miko Reglia, and that Durrone advocates the construction of more of these devices.

Later, the technologically-minded Imperial scientists made even greater advances, pushing technology into direct interface with the Force as produced by living beings, with astounding, if not always cautiously realized, results.

One such breakthrough was Nasdra Magrody's subelectronic converter. As most know, Magrody was a near-human Arkanian and one of the original Death Star designers. But he was also a closet Force-sensitive, reluctant --indeed, scared to death -- to reveal his special abilities. And yet he could not

suppress his desire to explore the legacy he'd inherited. Magrody methodically taught himself to do what came naturally to most Force-users: "to influence the energy field by means of thought wave concentrations" (i.e. to use the Force). But Magrody's scientific nature also inclined him to challenge the idea that the Force could not affect complex machinery such as droids. In his essays, "The Light Side of the Subelectronic Force," and "The Universal Energy Field," Magrody speculated the possibility of implanting a subelectronic converter in the brain of a being with the ability to use the Force, similar to Arkanian experiments with the Yaka. This would allow that person to manipulate droids through the Force, or in Magrody's words to "influence artificial intelligences of varying complexities at the individual synaptic level."

His suggestions were largely ignored by the scientific community...but not by the Emperor's Hand, Roganda Ismaren. She kidnapped Magrody, forcing him to realize this hypothetical device and implant it into her son Irek. The lethal potential of the subelectronic converter was seen in the last decades, with the Ismarens' resurrection of the Eye of Palpatine and ultimately the conversion of Irek into a mechanical monster himself.

Another breakthrough was the creation of the remarkable Shadow Droids. Unlike the Haor Chall vulture droid or robotic TIE/D, Shadow Droids were built around the living brains of fallen starfighter aces. Engineer extraordinaire Umak Leth never wholly understood Borborygamus Gog's Ssi-ruuvi research, but he was able to grasp enough of it to marry the bizarre technology with established cyber pilot systems, which combined brain matter with machine but had previously been used only for space exploration vessels. As with the Force Detector, Palpatine again demonstrated his contempt for a purely scientific approach to the Force by blessing this obtuse marriage between organic and inorganic matter with a touch of the dark side, giving the fighters a "sixth sense" in combat.

But like the Ssi-ruuvi technology after which it was patterned, the fusion of living tissue and droid components was incongruous, achieved purely through cold mathematical brutishness, and lent itself easily to decay. While initially compliant, eventually the human sentiences of the Shadow Droids yearned for fulfillment of death like a Charon cultist. This desire was then fueled by its own dark side energies, destroying the delicate cyborg interface and causing the Shadow Droid to degenerate into immobile cyberostasis at best, or insanity at worst. This perceived glitch was later rectified by installing hardware that stripped the brain matter of any remaining humanity. Thus, while the droids were undoubtedly conscious, they do not exhibit one iota of a sentient conscience.

Nevertheless, Shadow Droids were the first real success in emulating the joining of Force and sentient-programming of the fabled Iron Knights. But again, the marriage was marred by the dark side. Upon reflection, the most scientifically-minded of Skywalker's resurging Jedi, such as Cray Mingla, abandoned all hope that machines could be manipulated by means other than Sith mechu-deru. All Jedi, that is, save for the Iron Knights themselves...and their symbionts, the Shard.

3. The Shard

One hundred years before the fall of the Old Republic, scouts encountered the crystal-like Shard on the planet Orax. Silicone-based lifeforms, the Shard are immobile, growing in clusters along rocks

near the mineral-rich springs of their homeworld. Able to sense and produce electromagnetic charges, the Shard share a collective-consciousness. It is only through this electromagnetism that the Shard are able to perceive anything, and thanks to it that they are gifted with a facility for mechanical manipulation. They were naturally intrigued by the Republic scouts' droids.

Only a few dozen Shard took to the idea of separating from the group-mind, but those that did immediately formed a strong symbiotic relationship with their droids. The two entities complemented one another perfectly, the droid giving a Shard mobility as well as a variety of modes of perception, and a Shard in turn giving the droid a decidedly living quality, as well as rights equal to all other organic sentients. In this way, Shard and droid both were able to explore the galaxy and a multitude of new experiences.

Then Palpatine's New Order emerged, and with it a shameless prejudice against aliens and disdain for droids unlike ever before. The Shard ambassadors, belonging to both parties, were doubly disparaged, and many were killed, dismantled, and destroyed. Most pretended to be mere servile droids to escape execution.

There were some Shard, however, that were still more persecuted, for they were a menace in yet another sense. For not only were they droids, and not only were they aliens, they were Jedi.

4. The Iron Knights

While most have forgotten the Iron Knights, fewer still remember that this name was not originally intended to be a flattering one. So named by other Jedi because, like early theories concerning Mandalorian Iron, they repulsed many in the Jedi Knighthood, it is a testament to the Iron Knights abilities that they made the name into a respectful one.

Of all the Shard that left Orax, only the one calling herself "Illum" could feel the Force. But from that lone Shard sprung an entire family of Force-sensitives. While most Shard ambassadors fused with whatever droids were willing to host them, Illum and several of her kin took the bodies of deactivated Juggernaut War Droids -- once dreaded during the Great Droid Revolution -- re-igniting the automaton consciousnesses within. While the warbots gave them unrivaled physical prowess, the Shard in turn gave something to their droid symbionts that had once been thought inconceivable -- the power of the Force.

Given the varying degrees of droid prejudice among the general public, as well as the Jedi themselves, finding a Jedi Master willing to school Illum and her kin proved less than simple. But there were a few that advocated research in the area of Force influence on droids. The Sunesi Jedi Master Aqinos -- who had trained several Jedi students in his time from Coruscant's Jedi Temple to Master Djinn Altis' unorthodox roving Chu'unthor Academy -- sought out Illum, and secretly trained her and her dozen off-spring on the planet Dweem in an abandoned Republic base used during the threat of the Terrible Glare. However, when the Clone Wars erupted, Jedi Knights were shocked to encounter Force-endowed, lightsaber-wielding FLTCH series droids, Uulshos Justice Droids, and Juggernaut War Droids fighting along side them. Master Aqinos's involvement was soon exposed, and for his "presumptuousness" and "highly dangerous initiative," the Jedi Council excommunicated

he and his Iron Knights from the Knighthood. Funding for droid-Force interface research, which had never endeared itself to the Council, was systematically eliminated.

However, there was no ignoring the good that the Iron Knights did during the war. Those that survived were elevated to the rank of high marshal by the Republic Chancellor. However, it was soon apparent that the move was politically motivated, more in the interest of gaining the support of the Coalition of Automaton Rights Activists than in rewarding true heroism and the Iron Knights soon found themselves without support. Unwanted, Aqinos retreated with most of the Iron Knights to their stronghold on Dweem. Other Iron Knights continued to serve the Republic despite the prejudices they faced. They were among the first casualties of the Jedi Purge.

Approximately two years after establishing his Jedi Praxeum, using clues the Old Republic Jedi Callista Ming had provided in conversation with Master Skywalker, a group of his students successfully tracked the estranged metal defenders to their base on Dweem. There, Master Aqinos and the Iron Knights had resided for seventy years, and were more than ready to rejoin the Knighthood to help establish a new Jedi Order.

Of course, when the Yuuzhan Vong invaded the Known Galaxy, droid-kind again found itself under assault. This time, however, droids had their High Marshals to defend them. The Iron Knights successfully repelled attacks by anti-technologists such as the Red Knights of Life on the planets Osarian and Uffel and reportedly even saved Kligson's Moon (known as "Droid World") from Yuuzhan Vong attack. However, the decimation of the Hosk space station is known to have prompted the fall of at least one Iron Knight to the dark side.

5. Conclusions

The question persists: can droids feel the Force without a living mediator? For many, the distinction is probably academic at this point, but under the New Republic's strivings toward droid representation, and especially in light of the recent rise of anti-droid groups spurred by the Yuuzhan Vong's hatred for all technology, the question has begun to find strong voice among droids' rights lobbyists. Perhaps the most promise for direct affectation of the Force by a droid was to be found in the infamous bounty hunter 4-LOM who, according to Master Skywalker, insisted on his self-awareness and who purportedly learned to see visions of possible futures from the Gand findsman Zuckuss. Sadly, the droid never pursued instruction, and the droid's lifestyle is not encouraging for those wanting to disassociate mechanical manipulation of the Force from the dark side. Of course, it would be shortsighted to say that all bounty hunters are evil. Also, for their part, the Iron Knights have never demonstrated any more susceptibility to the dark side than the average wholly organic Jedi.

To those who continue to insist that affecting mechanicals and technology through the Force is the way of the dark side, there still remain simple counter-arguments: what of lightsabers then? Do these devices not help attune a Jedi's living Force? What of holocrons? Are they not considered among the greatest wonders of the Jedi, inspiring awe even in the worldliest Jedi Masters? And yet both are technological derivatives.

Jedi Master Aqinos once addressed these questions: "I have heard the hypocritical argument that 'technology' and 'droids' are not the same thing, which of course only makes sense if droids are in fact conscious, and thus in some sense indeed alive. Instead of wasting my breath refuting this statement, I will address the stronger rebuttal that admits of a connection between droids and technology, that is that the channeling of the Force through lightsabers and holocrons is a purely 'inobtrusive' act, unlike the aggressive manipulation of, say, mechu-deru.

"Perhaps. The same weak argument has been made to contrast Jedi use of affect mind, and its so-called 'dark' counterpart control mind. Is this what we have been reduced to, petty semantics, returned to the dark age of Plaristes? We must be wiser than this. I am reminded of the time when I was still a Padawan, and my Master Jaled Dur led me to a row of rocks sorted in size from pebbles no larger than a fingernail, to boulders the size of, well, a mountain. Every Jedi knows the story of Master Ferleen Snee who lifted the Muntuur Stones with ease, and I ached at my chance to similarly prove myself. I viewed the smaller pebbles condescendingly, knowing the ease with which I'd be able to lift them, and I looked at the mountain standing on the opposite end, feeling it would be impossible to move. But as I brought my attention to the middle way, I felt certain I could lift the boulder equal in size to me. Then my eyes moved to those rocks of progressively greater size. And I knew I could lift the next one, and the next, and the next, knowing the only difference was in my mind... But when I tried to actually levitate that mountain, to no one's surprise but my own, I could not. Nor the boulder before it, nor the one before that.

"There is a definite and unmistakable line one cannot cross, regardless of belief. It is finding that definite line, that balance, that being a Jedi is about. Between light and darkness, living and unifying Force. It is that balance I have striven to find among organics and inorganics, among droids and the Force, between life and death. Do our bodies not require dead minerals for sustenance, do not mynocks and space slugs, more rock than beast, still live? My skin has grayed, and my eyes have gone stale in this pursuit, but by the Maker, I regret nothing. My memory has blunted the exact position of the line I found that day with Master Dur among those lifeless rocks, but what I do remember is how vibrantly those same lifeless rocks gave off the emanations of the Force." (Master Aqinos died during the war with the Yuuzhan Vong).

Since the end of the war, the Iron Knights -- along with the great majority of the galaxy -- have struggled to view the invaders as anything other than their mortal enemies. But like their teacher, they too, hope and struggle to find that balance of which Master Aqinos spoke.

It is the hope of serious researchers and droids alike that one day immorality concerning the exploration of the correlation between droids and the Force will cease to be the lopsided issue that it is. Many years of investigation and patience still lay ahead, for the general populace and the Jedi as well.

Endnotes for Droids and the Force

Introduction

The idea of droid discrimination in the Star Wars universe goes back to *A New Hope*, when the Mos Eisley Cantina bartender yells to Luke, "Your droids! We don't serve their kind here!" Since then, various authors contributing to the Star Wars mythos have elaborated upon the origins and scope of this prejudice.

The Coalition of Automaton Rights Activists and the Mechanical Liberation Front are two droids rights' groups with distinctly differing approaches introduced in the roleplaying game supplement *Cynabar's Fantastic Technology: Droids* (1997, West End Games).



San Herrera and Nia Reston's "Droid Rights" essay is from the Living Force update by the same name at the Wizards of the Coast website (2004, Wizards.com). A sequel of sorts, called "Cause of the Month," was also published (Wizards.com, 2004). Arhul Hextrophon's "The Problem of Droid Abuse" is a reference to the article by the same name found in *The Official X-Wing Strategy Guide* (1993, Prima Publishing). Its attribution to Hextrophon, the mentor to reputed Alliance historian Voren Na'al, is new. Hextrophon is the original in-universe historian of *Galaxy Guide 1: A New Hope* (1989, West End Games), *Galaxy Guide 3: The Empire Strikes Back* (1989, West End Games), and *Galaxy Guide 5: Return of the Jedi* (1989, West End Games).

Section 1: The Problem

This is the first anyone has heard of the pre-Republic philosopher Plaristes and his views on droid consciousness. The glosses of his arguments come from real-life philosophers, including John Searle's "Chinese Room" theory from the book *Minds, Brains, and Science* (1984, Harvard University Press) and Jorge Luis Borges' essay "The Postulation of Reality" from *Labyrinths* (1964, New Directions).

Though the number is likely short, the reference to fifty billion droids in service is a deliberate reference to the comic "Rust Never Sleeps" found in #156 of the *UK Star Wars Weekly* publication, an oversized comics magazine that reprinted the familiar Marvel Star Wars comics in serial format. The story is more easily found in *Devilworlds #1* (1996, Dark Horse Comics).

The concept of "Artificial Sentience" comes from the roleplaying book *Cynabar's Fantastic Technology: Droids* (1997, West End Games). Droids were first stratified into degrees one through five in the first edition of *The Star Wars Sourcebook* (1987, West End Games).

Mention of an Akurian Geyser is a throwaway referring to the rare Star Wars comic published in Pizzazz magazine. The storyline referenced here appears in the first nine issues of Pizzazz and was reprinted in *Star Wars #0* (1997, Dark Horse Comics). Another throwaway, the character Joon Odovrera is a stand-up comedian who made his debut in the Rodian entry of the first edition of the *Essential Guide to Alien Species* (2001, Del Rey).

"The One Who Creates" is the simple definition given for "The Maker," extrapolated from See-Threepio's famous exclamation, "Thank the Maker!" (before the prequels revealed he was unwittingly referring to Anakin Skywalker), in multiple editions of *A Guide to the Star Wars Universe* (1984, 1994, 2000, Del Rey). C-3PO's explanation in *Return of the Jedi*, "It's against my programming to impersonate a deity," serves as the basis for the fact here that impersonating deities is a general droid taboo. The world Ronyards and its religious order of droids is again from "Rust Never Sleeps" in *Devilworlds #1* (1996, Dark Horse Comics). Meanwhile, the alien Sunesi and their worship of the Maker are found in multiple sources. The first is in the short story, "Only Droids Serve the Maker" in *Star Wars Adventure Journal #10* (1996, West End Games).

The Great Droid Revolution is originally referenced in relation to Master Arca in *Tales of the Jedi: Dark Lords of the Sith #3* (1994, Dark Horse Comics). Meanwhile, the Arkanian Revolution was first mentioned in Gorm the Dissolver's entry in the first edition of the *Essential Guide to Droids* (1999, Del Rey), and slightly elaborated upon in the timeline included with the *New Essential Guide to Characters* (2002, Del Rey). The arrogant Jedi Master Jorus C'baoth's disdain toward droids is inferred from a similar attitude held by his clone in *Dark Force Rising* (1992, Bantam).

The idea of inanimate objects having a touch of the Force is a concept dating back to the George Lucas' earliest scripts. According to *Star Wars: The Annotated Screenplays* (1997, Del Rey), in the third draft of *A New Hope* Obi-Wan explains to Luke that the Force can be collected and amplified using a "Kiber Crystal." This Force-endowed crystal, now spelled "Kaiburr," became a legitimate part of the Star Wars universe in the novel *Splinter of the Mind's Eye* (1978, Del Rey) just one year after the film's release.

River stones are a reference to the Force-sensitive rocks from Qui-Gon Jinn's home planet, introduced in *Jedi Apprentice #3: The Hidden Past* (1999, Scholastic). However, the idea that a lifeless rock can have any significant kind of natural connection with the Force is first suggested in *The Empire Strikes Back*. As Yoda tells Luke: "Luminous beings are we, not this crude matter. You must feel the Force around you; here, between you, me, the tree, the rock, everywhere. Yes. Even between the land and the ship."

"Skippy" is the nickname given in the *Star Wars Tales #1* story "Skippy the Jedi Droid" (1999, Dark Horse Comics) to the astromech R5-D4 (called "Red" by Luke during the Jawa swap meet in *A New Hope*). Reference to "wild rumors about Jedi droids named Skippy" is carefully worded so as not to suggest that the events presented in the *Tales* parody are actually canonical. *Galaxy Guide 1: A New Hope* (1989, West End Games) had already created a backstory for R5-D4. The reference to Skippy here is just the proverbial wink to fans in the know.

Reference to *mechu-deru*, Belia Darzu, and the Technobeasts is an amalgamation of multiple sources. The power of *mechu-deru* was first mentioned in "The Lost Art," an adventure hook for the darksider Roganda Ismaren in *Star Wars Gamer #5's* "The Emperor's Pawns" (2001, Wizards of the Coast). Also mentioned in that adventure seed are "mythological half-being/half-mechanical abominations." These are Belia Darzu's Technobeasts. Though the name here is new, such monsters were first mentioned in the *Tales of the Jedi Companion* sourcebook (1996, West End Games). Smitten with the potentially horrific effects of nanogene droid "super technology" from the

Gamemaster Handbook for Second Edition (1993, West End Games), I added that concept to the Technobeasts' arsenal as well. Finally, Belia Darzu herself is mentioned briefly in the "Dark Armor" section of *The Dark Side Sourcebook* (2001, Wizards of the Coast), which calls her "one of the Sith Lords who kept the Sith cult alive before the Battle of Ruusan." I later picked up this thread for "Path of Evil" in *Vader: The Ultimate Guide* (2005, IGN Entertainment) and christened her a full-fledged Dark Lady of the Sith.

The parade of cyborgs in the last paragraph of this section comes from a variety of sources. Jedi Master Even Piell, of course, is from the Jedi Council scenes in *The Phantom Menace* and General Grievous is the villain of *Revenge of the Sith*. The others, however, are a bit harder to recognize. Gorm the Dissolver makes a blink-and-you'll-miss it introduction in the comic *Dark Empire #3* (1992, Dark Horse Comics), though his name wasn't made officially known until the release of the second edition of *A Guide to the Star Wars Universe* (1994, Del Rey). Gorm later appeared in a legitimate role in "A Hunter's Fate: Greedo's Tale" in *Tales From the Mos Eisley Cantina* (1995, Bantam), and in the webstrip adaptation by the same name (2005, StarWars.com).

Kligson is a Clone Wars veteran introduced in "Droid World," #47 of Marvel's monthly Star Wars comic (1981, Marvel Comics), also reprinted in *Classic Star Wars: A Long Time Ago Vol. 3: Resurrection of Evil* (2002, Dark Horse Comics). High Inquisitor Tremayne makes his debut in *Galaxy Guide 9: Fragment From the Rim* (1993, West End Games) and Lumiya makes her first appearance in "Figurehead," #88 of Marvel's monthly Star Wars comic (1988, Marvel Comics), reprinted in *Classic Star Wars: A Long Time Ago Vol. 5: Wookiee World* (2003, Dark Horse Comics). Finally, the amputation of the Jedi Tenel Ka's arm occurs in *Young Jedi Knights: Lightsabers* (1996, Berkley/Boulevard) while Jedi cyborgs Empatojayos Brand and Daye Azur-Jamin were introduced in *Dark Empire II #4* (1995, Dark Horse Comics) and *Star Wars Adventure Journal #10's* "Only Droids Serve the Maker" (1996, West End Games), respectively. ~ Abel G. Peña

Section 2: New Advances

This section introduces a number of Imperial mad scientists. Borborygamous [sic] Gog and his "Essence Stealer" on the Nespis VII space station appear in *Galaxy of Fear #5: Ghost of the Jedi* (1997, Bantam). Gog's study of Ssi-ruuvi "entechment" technology and the battle droid ships the aliens use is new information but refers to *The Truce at Bakura* (1993, Bantam), while soul-snares were employed by the mysterious Order of the Terrible Glare, seen briefly in the story "Blind Fury" in the UK *Star Wars Weekly* #159. This story was reprinted in *Devilworlds #1* (1996, Dark Horse Comics).



In the curious paragraph examining the relationship between Mandalorian Iron, introduced in *Tales of the Jedi: Dark Lords of the Sith #2* (Dark Horse Comics, 1994), and the Force, I attached this pseudo-scientific footnote for the Lucasfilm editors:

"I thought it important to distinguish Mandalorian iron from 'normal irons' because of the

intended or unintended parallels between Star Wars's "the Force" and the "magnetic force" of our own galaxy. The very fact that iron, a powerful attractant to magnets in our world, has been [loosely] associated with the Force in [this] way, as well as the Force's association with "electron rays" (insofar as the Jedi in *The Phantom Menace* could not use their lightsabers or the Force to penetrate the red electron walls that blocked their path in the movie's final duel), and the obvious "magnetic" quality of magnetism that so resembles the Force-power telekinesis, suggests to me that there is a parallel [between magnetism and the Force] that may be further elaborated upon, but [which] could be complicated by the concept that Mandalorian iron is in effect working in the opposite sense [in Star Wars] that iron would [work] in relation to magnetism in our galaxy."

The scientist Umak Leth and his Universal Energy Cage were introduced in the comic *Dark Empire #2* (1992, Dark Horse Comics). While the cage appeared as part of the story, Leth himself only appeared by name in an essay included in the backpages of the comic. The *Dark Empire Sourcebook* (1993, West End Games) and the first edition of the *Essential Guide to Weapons and Technology* (1997, Del Rey) elaborated specifics on the containment unit. Reference to Mandalorian Iron and Ingoian scatrium used in the cage's superconductors is new. Scatrium is the precious metal found on the planet Ingo from "Droids: The Adventures of Artoo-Detoo and See-Threepio" in *Dungeon #111/Polyhedron #170* (2004, Paizo Publishing) which was based on the animated TV program by the same name (1985, Nelvana), and conclusively links the Ingoian race first mentioned in the *Shadows of the Empire Sourcebook* (1997, West End Games) to the planet Ingo. That might seem a foregone conclusion to most, but continuity is a slippery thing. Sometimes it's these little things that count.

Force Detectors first appeared in the novel *Jedi Search* (1994, Bantam). Their connection to the Force-obsessed scientist Jenna Zan Arbor from *Jedi Apprentice: The Evil Experiment* (2001, Scholastic) is new. Lord Cronal's implementation of the "Science of Darkness" in his contribution to these devices is a direct reference to and quote from the *Dark Empire Sourcebook* (1993, West End Games), linking Cronal to Palpatine's Dark Side Adepts on the world Byss and to the Emperor's plans to establish a Dark Side Theocracy. These tenuous connections were later confirmed in "Outcasts and Megalomaniacs Welcome," part six of the Dark Forces Saga roleplaying game articles (2005, Wizards.com). Cronal himself first appeared in the *Gamemaster Screen for Second Edition* adventure hook, "Monster Maker" (1992, West End Games), while his alter ego Blackhole debuted in newspapers in the Star Wars comics strip storyline Gambler's World (1978, L.A. Times Syndicate). The Circarpousian thaissen crystals Cronal uses in the Force Detectors are first mentioned in *The Power of the Jedi Sourcebook* (2002, Wizards of the Coast).

The use of Force detectors by the Dark Jedi Brakiss for his Shadow Academy refers to the events of *Young Jedi Knights: The Lost Ones* (1995, Berkley/Boulevard), while Jedi Master Kyp Durrone's use of a Force Detector in finding his apprentice Miko Reglia is new information.

The reluctant Imperial scientist Nasdra Magrody and his implantation of the subelectronic converter into Irek Ismaren are from *Children of the Jedi* (1996, Bantam), though his Arkanian origin and the names of his academic texts are new. Meanwhile, Ismaren's transformation into a "mechanical monster himself" occurs in *New Jedi Order: Enemy Lines II -- Rebel Stand* (2002, Del Rey).

Though they were first named in the *Dark Empire Sourcebook* (1993, West End Games), the robotic

TIE/Ds are from *Dark Empire #3* (1992, Dark Horse Comics), while the Shadow Droids are first seen in the pages of *Dark Empire II #1* (1994, Dark Horse Comics). The marriage of Ssi-ruuvi entechment procedures to established cyber pilots systems, from *Han Solo and the Lost Legacy* (1980, Del Rey), is new, as is the potential for the fighters to fall into the traumatic reflex "cyberostasis," a concept introduced in *Han Solo at Stars' End* (1979, Del Rey).

The reference to the death-seeking Charon cultists alludes to the rpg books *Otherspace* (1989, West End Games) and *Otherspace II: Invasion* (1989, West End Games). Charon, of course, is also the name of the mythical boatman that gives passage to the dead across the River Styx in Greek/Roman mythology, not to mention the name of the planet Pluto's most well-known moon in our own solar system.

Section 3: The Shard

The Shard(s) were introduced in the roleplaying source article "Alien Encounters: The Shards" in *Star Wars Adventure Journal #15* (1997, West End Games), which reveals their origin and first contact with the Old Republic. The prejudice they faced in the Empire is new information.

Section 4: The Iron Knights

The name and race of the Iron Knights' unorthodox Jedi Master, the Sunesi alien Aqinos, is new information not originally specified in the *Star Wars Missions* book in which this character first appeared, *The Monsters of Dweem* (1998, Scholastic). However, most of the information about Aqinos and his Iron Knights, including their symbiosis with the Shards, is revealed here for the first time. Taking a clue from author Kathy Tyers' practice of naming Sunesi after famous historical figures in the *Star Wars Adventure Journal #10* story "Only Droids Thank the Maker" (1996, West End Games), I chose the name Aqinos as an homage to the theologian Saint Thomas Aquinas due to the overt parallels between the Sunesi religion and Christianity.

The Iron Knights tend to take names after Jedi lightsaber crystals, following their ancestor Ilum's example. Hence, the name of the Iron Knight named Luxum, after a dark side focusing crystal from the video game *Knights of the Old Republic* (2002, LucasArts).

The initial generation of Iron Knights also took the bodies of deactivated Juggernaut War Droids. These droids were first referenced in the equipment stats of the darksider Arden Lyn in "The Emperor's Pawns" in *Star Wars Gamer #5* (2001, Wizards of the Coast): Arden's robotic arm was taken from a Juggernaut. Iron Knights also took the bodies of FLTCH-series droids, which appeared in the first Star Wars ongoing storyarc, *Prelude to Rebellion* (1999, Dark Horse Comics), and the bodies of Uulshos Justice Droids, which appear in the roleplaying game book *Wanted by Cracken* (1993, West End Games).

Aqinos was a Jedi instructor aboard Djinn Altis' Ch'unthor Academy. According to *Darksaber* (1995, Bantam), Altis was the master of the Jedi Knight Callista Ming, who is Luke's love interest for a time. This connection helps explain how Callista could've known any clues to share with Luke pertaining to the Iron Knights' whereabouts.

The base on Dweem where Aqinos trained the Iron Knights was used during the conflict known as the Hundred-Year Darkness. This event was first mentioned in the comic *Dark Lords of the Sith #3* (1994, Dark Horse Comics). *The New Essential Chronology* (2005, Del Rey) recently revealed that this war, which occurred 7,000 years before the events of *A New Hope*, resulted in the exile of the dark Jedi who would eventually conquer the peoples known as the Sith and thus become the first "Dark Lords of the Sith."

The idea of assassin droids banding together to hunt Yuuzhan Vong was a theme originally slated to be explored in the *New Jedi Order* series (1999-2003, Del Rey), but was dropped. It was resurrected here and tied in with the Iron Knights.

Section 5: Conclusions

The potential Force-sensitivity (or robotic delusions) of the bounty hunter 4-LOM were first suggested in the short story "Of Possible Futures," in *Tales of the Bounty Hunters* (1996, Bantam). Jaled Dur, Aqinos' master, was a Jedi from *Gamemaster Screen for Second Edition* (1992, West End Games). This Jedi Master was famed for creating the Heart of the Universe, a gem with awesome though unspecified powers. Finally, another Jedi Master, Ferleen Snee, and his experience with Muntuur Stones was originally documented in *Galaxy Guide 9: Fragments From the Rim* (1993, West End Games).

Postscript: A final word on the article's in-universe author and its out-of-universe "translator." Tam Azur-Jamin is a Jedi Knight introduced in *New Jedi Order: Balance Point* (2000, Del Rey). He is the son of the Jedi Daye Azur-Jamin and Tinian Iatt from the story "Only Droids Serve the Maker" in *Star Wars Adventure Journal #10* (1996, West End Games). According to *New Jedi Order: The Unifying Force*, Tam's father disappears during the Yuuzhan Vong Invasion. This loss of his father, who was a cyborg, was to me the psychological motivation for Tam to "write" this treatise on the controversial relationship between droids, technology and the Force in order for him to get some closure, defend his father from traditional attacks against cyborgs, and to have him contribute something to the galaxy beyond his presumed death. Ironically, Daye is found alive in the adventure hook "Jedi Search" in "Unsung Heroes of the Light," part two of the Dark Forces Saga (2005, Wizards.com) and seems to in fact have fallen prey to exactly what his son attempted to exonerate him from, susceptibility to the dark side of the Force. Of course, that revelation is chronologically in the future, and Tam doesn't know it at the time he writes his treatise.

As for the attributed translator, fans have asked that since "Abel G. Peña" is listed as the translator, does that mean Abel G. Peña is now a character in the Star Wars universe? It's probably best to let this one go. First, I should mention that this playful attribution has a precedent. Several of Random House's children's books that came out during the prequels, such as *I Am A Pilot* (1999, Random House), *I Am A Droid* (1999, Random House), *I Am A Jedi Apprentice* (2002, Random House), and *I Am A Bounty Hunter* (2002, Random House) all are supposedly authored by the character each focuses on (Anakin, C-3PO, or Boba Fett). But if you look closely at the credits, you'll see that these stories are written "As Told To..." a particular out-of-universe author, either Marc Cerasini or Kerry Milliron. It's a slippery slope to interpret these obviously playful attributions as canonizing some real authors into the fictional Star Wars universe. It's good for a chuckle, though. ~ *Abel G. Peña*